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SENATE JUDICIARY
NO. 16
3/17/09
HB228

Members of the Senate Judiciary Committee:

My name is Russell O'Leary and I am a student at Montana State University (MSU) living in Bozeman and a permanent resident of Butte, Montana. The purpose of this letter is to express my concerns in regard to a bill you will be hearing on March 17th, HB228 entitled "Citizen Self-defense and Firearm Rights".

I would like to give you a brief background on myself so you can understand that my concerns are not founded on ideology but rather the safety of residents of this state and students of MSU. I grew up on a ranch outside of Butte and have been around firearms of all types my entire life. The Second amendment has always been important in my family as I am an avid shooter and sportsman. I took hunters safety when I was 12 and have traveled all around the state enjoying my rights. Recently I purchased a sidearm and I am currently in the process of acquiring a concealed carry permit.

That being said, I am deeply concerned about the language in this bill. Removing the requirement for a permit and therefore allowing anyone to carry a weapon in public in a concealed fashion without any formal firearms training opens the door for accidents. Ill informed and unpracticed citizens carrying sidearms absolutely does not make me feel safer.

Another concern centers around the language in this bill that allows for brandishing the sidearm when threatened. College students and other citizens do not want or need this right. College age parties already have a tenancy get out of hand when fights break out. Allowing this type of behavior will only lead to the escalation of fights to a level that is truly scary.

This bill is filled with language that I feel very uncomfortable with. Law abiding citizens already have the rights they need to protect and defend themselves. I oppose this bill as a student, a gun owner, and as a member of the Montana community, and I strongly urge a DO NOT PASS on HB228.

Thank you for your time.

Regards,

Russell O'Leary
Bozeman, MT